

Educational Success = Environmental Change

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In the book, *Through the Looking Glass*, the walrus and the carpenter are walking together on the beach. The walrus says, "The time has come to talk of many things." Sad to say that in deaf education, we have TALKED too long about too many things with little or no positive results. For well over 150 years, students have been subjected to...small class size.....self contained classrooms.....peers with limited language....inappropriate age groupings.....refused access to the academic challenges of hearing peers.... teachers lacking appropriate subject credentials. These situations continue because of the false notion that deaf or hard of hearing children need curriculum content spoon-fed from bottom-up rather than top down while the real meal should be a mixture of both and more importantly a change of environment.

From the teacher practitioner's perspective, current educational success is measured by a student's SIGN usage and the teacher's limited teaching strategies. These are necessary but not fulfilling the student's entire educational needs. Deaf Education has been too controlled and kept in a limiting environment. Also forgotten is the wealth of information gained from social interactions with those outside of one's immediate cultural groups. Social behaviors silently modify behavior and create educational challenges that encourage the students to achieve beyond what professionals label "success". For this reason teachers must step outside of the old deaf education box with their goals, strategies, materials and emphasis on SIGN and create a rich, multifaceted and exciting learning environment. More importantly they must break down the sides of that box and push their students into the light. Returning to the characters walking on the beach, "If this were only cleared away," they said, "it WOULD be grand!"